


# ROTUNDA

SUMMER 1974 VOLUME 7 NUMBER 3 \$1.25



*The Great Chinese Exhibition  
Arrives At The ROM*





Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2025 with funding from  
Royal Ontario Museum

<https://archive.org/details/rotundav07no3rom>

# ROTUNDA

the magazine of The Royal Ontario Museum  
Volume 7, Number 3, Summer 1974

---

**Focus** Walter Kenyon 2  
On the Ethics of Archaeological Excavation

---

Visiting the Chinese Exhibition at The ROM August 8-November 16

**Background** Barbara Stephen 4

**A Bronze Bestiary** Sara Irwin 12

**Two Shang Dynasty Oracle Bones** Chin-hsiung Hsü 14

**Paradise Tube** Doris Dohrenwend 16

**A Seventh-century Loan Agreement** Greg Whincup 18

**Prince Yide's Horse** Patricia Proctor 20

---

**Visions of Cathay** John Vollmer 22  
The Mystique of Chinoiserie

---

**The Growing Collections** 30

---

**Doorways to Antiquity** Louis D. Levine 32  
Early Iranian Settlements Surrender Some of Their Secrets

---



*Detail of bronze Guo vessel in the form of a monster, excavated in 1959 at Shilou, Shansi Province, China. See page 12.*

**Noah Torno, M.B.E.**  
*Chairman, Board of Trustees*

**Walter M. Tovell, B.A., M.S., Ph.D.**  
*Director*

**Maxwell Henderson, F.C.A.**  
*Director (Administration)*

**W.B. Scott, B.A., Ph.D.**  
*Associate Director*

**The Main Building**  
**100 Queen's Park**  
Information 928-3690

**Sigmund Samuel Canadiana Building**  
**14 Queen's Park Crescent West**  
Information 928-3710

**McLaughlin Planetarium**  
**100 Queen's Park**  
Information 928-8550

## **Membership Information**

The public is invited to join the Royal Ontario Museum and share in its activities. Membership includes free subscription to ROTUNDA; invitations to previews of exhibitions and new galleries; exclusive access to licensed Members' Lounge; free admission to lectures; 10% reduction at Book and Gift Shop; advance information on coming events. Annual Membership is \$25, Family Membership \$40, Life Membership \$500. For further information write: Membership Secretary, Royal Ontario Museum, 100 Queen's Park, Toronto M5S 2C6, or telephone 928-3704.

## **Editorial Staff**

Alex MacDonald, *Editor*  
Olive Koyama, *Associate Editor*  
Elizabeth Lopianowska, *Associate Editor*  
Marsha Rodney, *Editorial Assistant*  
Leighton Warren, *Chief Photographer*  
Marie Hands, *Designer*

Published quarterly by the Royal Ontario Museum, 100 Queen's Park, Toronto, Ontario, M5S 2C6.  
Subscription \$4.00 a year. Single copies \$1.25 each, back issues \$1.50.

Second class mail registration  
number 1531

Requests for information cover a wide range of topics in a public institution such as ours. Many are of a technical nature, dealing with simple—or not so simple—matters of fact. A spider, for example, will arrive in the mail with the query “Is it poisonous?” Or a small boy will appear with a large rock, and the fervent hope that it is a meteorite, preferably a golden meteorite.

Occasionally, however, someone will raise a question of a fundamentally different nature, a question that asks us not what we know, but who we are. And then we must stand forth to be counted. The following letter was written in response to such a question.

*Editor*

---

## *On the ethics of archaeological excavation*

Dear colleague:

Your recent letter asked for my views “concerning archaeological excavation; particularly the excavation of burials”. I find this question very difficult to answer, and for a variety of reasons. Primarily, the difficulty seems to arise from some confusion as to the nature of archaeology. Archaeology, at least to me, is that intellectual discipline that is concerned with man and his works.

Whatever merit it might have, is derived from the fact that it can—and frequently does—give answers that have historical and social validity. For example, the inhabitants of the newly discovered Americas were first seen as the “lost tribes of Israel”, the “survivors of Alexander the Great’s fleet”, etc., etc. Endless books and articles were written to prove that the mighty earthworks of the Ohio and Mississippi Valleys, among others, could not have been constructed by the “simple savages” that occupied those regions in the early historic period. This entire edifice was only overturned when the archaeologist appeared on the scene with a sharp trowel and, what is infinitely more important, a mind that had been trained and disciplined by a lengthy exposure to such things as cultural and physical anthropology. Only then could



---

the biological and the social or cultural history of an area be worked out.

Here in Ontario one branch of human history can be traced back in some detail for over 12,000 years before the landing of Columbus in the "New" world. And the people who scattered their remains in such richness and variety across the face of the province are "Men out of Asia". They are not refugees from the lost continents of mythology; nor are they misplaced Israelites. They are simply an Asiatic branch of a tree that embraces all mankind. If I belabour this point, I do so because I know beyond any reasonable doubt that *all* branches of humanity are important; for we are all variations on a single theme.

Now the purpose of all this moral philosophy is to emphasize the fact that the history of a people does not flow spontaneously out of that people and into a history book. A considerable amount of midwifery is always involved. And since most of the chapters in the story of man were never written down, the bringing forth has to be done by an archaeologist. In other words, if we are to know the history of the Iroquois, for example, or of the Sioux, we must turn to the archaeologist. And my own feeling—admittedly biased—is that the history of these people, and all other peoples, is important. Therefore, archaeologists must be permitted to dig holes, for there is no other way in which the cultural and biological history of peoples can be made known.

And now to specifics. I think that much of the problem you are concerned with is derived from the fact that so much of archaeological research and reporting is concerned with things rather than with

people. That is, we sometimes create the impression that archaeology is concerned only with the metrical and statistical characteristics of projectile points, pot sherds, bones, and such things. We know—at least I hope we know—that archaeology is the study of people. But we do not always make this clear to the general public. And there, precisely, is the crunch. For I do not believe that any human society or group is indifferent to its own history.

We must be very careful, however, to treat archaeological remains with the dignity and reverence with which they should be treated. We must also make it clear to every segment of the population that we are concerned with the history of man and his works. If we do this (and it will not be easy) then the details of archaeological policy can be worked out as they arise. If we do not do this, we will be smitten with the jaw-bone of a political ass, and presumably an entire branch of humanity will be left to gaze longingly after the vanished continent of Mu.

Yours sincerely,

**W.A. Kenyon**

*Office of the Chief Archaeologist*



# Visiting the Chinese Exhibition at The ROM

*August 8 - November 16*

## Background

Barbara Stephen

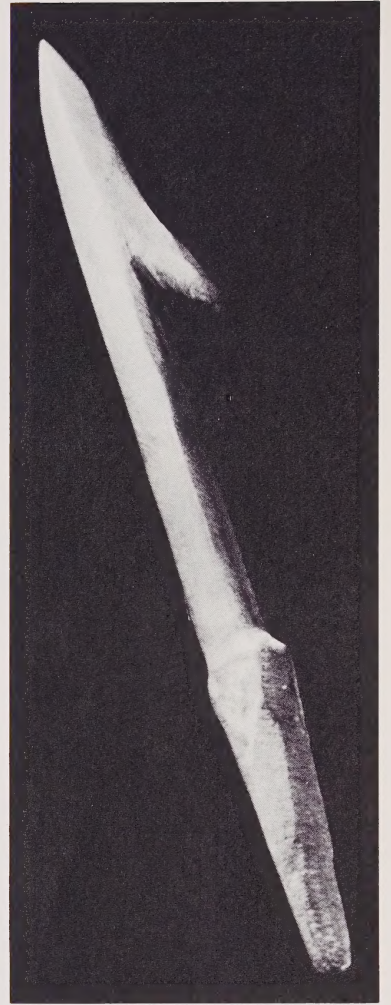
The great "Exhibition of Archaeological Finds of the People's Republic of China" will be in Canada for more than three months and during that time the ROM hopes that half a million visitors will be able to see it. The idea for such an exhibition grew slowly over a number of years and was finally realized thanks to the work of many people both in North America and abroad. More than a decade has passed since the Far Eastern Department, alerted by reports and photographs of new archaeological finds in the Chinese journals, first expressed interest in the idea of an exhibition. Most recently, negotiations

carried on by France and Great Britain resulted in the final approval by their representatives in Peking of the impressive group of cultural treasures that now form the Exhibition.

When the ROM learned that the Exhibition was a reality and that it would be coming to Toronto, we also discovered that it would be the most extensive and complex exhibition ever held here. With congestion in the present museum building already critical, the problem of finding adequate display space was immediately appreciated. Once again the European Department has graciously relinquished the area of the Ar-







*Facing page: Painted earthenware bowl 4" high, made c. 3000 B.C. by a potter of the neolithic Qinglianggang culture in Jiangsu Province, eastern China.*

*Left: A fragment of early 8th-century batik-dyed silk gauze excavated in 1968 at Astana, a stage of the Silk Road in western China. Above: A Qinglianggang bone fishing spear, 6½" long, c. 4000 B.C., excavated in 1960.*



*Facing page: A Qingliangang polished stone knife, 9" long, with hafting holes.*

*Below: The excavation site of the neolithic town of Banpo (c. 4000 B.C.), protected by the hangar-like buildings of the Banpo Museum in Shansi Province, northern China.*

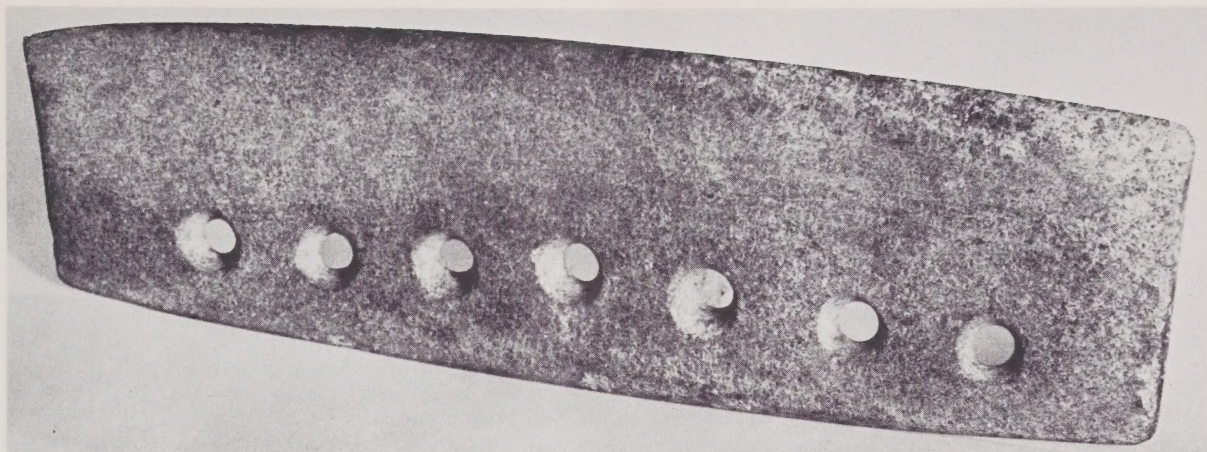
mour Court, and even some of its gallery space behind, in the interest of the public, and every visitor to the Exhibition will have reason to be grateful to them. Further space was gained by advancing in time a planned renovation of Exhibition Hall. This area, originally designed as a simple structure to hold the Chinese Tomb complex now in the garden, had been equipped many years ago with a "temporary" partial second floor; it will now have a full second storey of more adequate dimensions, plus improved wiring and other facilities that

will benefit special exhibitions for years to come.

Before visiting the Exhibition itself, visitors should pause to consider both what it is and what it is not. The objects assembled are exclusively archaeological; that is, they have been preserved over the centuries or millennia in the ground until Chinese archaeologists during the past 25 years unearthed them. Only occasionally have pieces made of perishable materials been preserved after long burial—the textiles and documents from Sinkiang Province are rarities that sur-







vived the centuries only because of the preservative action of the dry soils of the area where they were found. For the most part, objects discovered by China's archaeologists are made of durable materials like ceramic or metal; the baskets and woodwork have vanished, though traces of them may remain captured in earth impressions or perhaps on the base of a pot. We are left to learn of the creative activity of people of the past mainly through study of a limited range of materials.

Nevertheless, the Exhibition presents a surprising variety of materials in objects made over an exceptionally long period of time. A cultural span of more than half a million years is no small achievement, and reminds us of the almost inconceivable continuity of Chinese culture that underlies so many western conceptions of the Chinese people and their arts. The Chinese organizers have deliberately excluded any of the graceful arts of the later periods which would be more easily recognizable to western viewers—the elegant ceramics with enamel decoration that so profoundly influenced later European taste, the carved lacquers and cloisonné of the Ming and Qing Dynasties. These later periods, beginning in 1368 A.D., are relatively recent history, and the Exhibition is restricted to earlier times.

The Chinese organizers have

presented each host country with a scheme for the Exhibition which lists each object in an order at once chronological and grouped by the site of excavation. Not every country has observed this strict order in the arrangement of the Exhibition; in London there were some modifications to the Chinese scheme, reflected in the catalogue. The ROM elected to adhere to the Chinese plan very closely, both because it was simple and logical in terms of our space, and because it was the way the Chinese organizers wished to present their own material to the Canadian public.

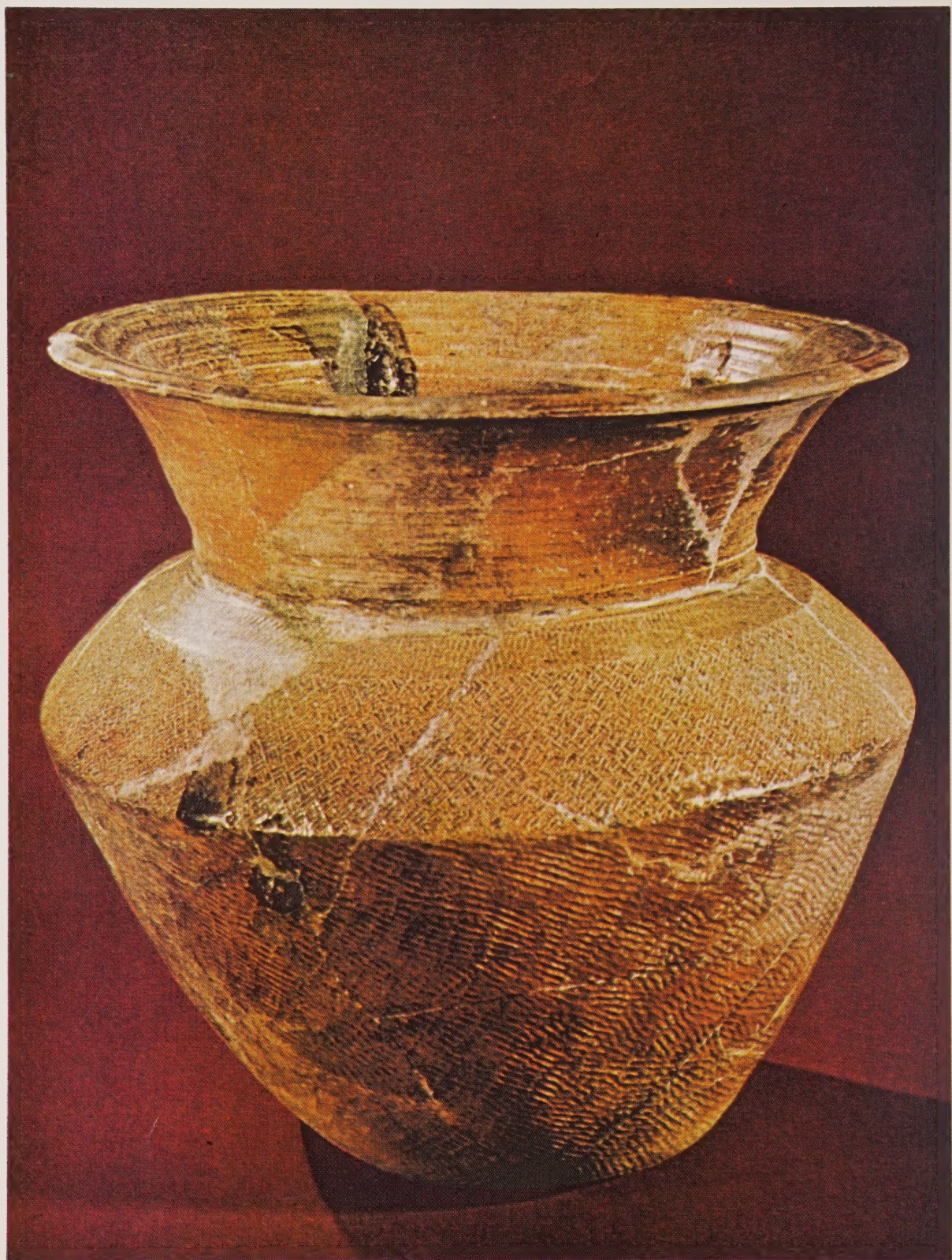
Setting the mood for the Exhibition itself are a number of large photographs showing some of the major cultural monuments of China, including museums, and giving a glimpse of the archaeological activity that made the show possible. Also subsidiary to the main part of the Exhibition is a display of publications, all of them reflecting the serious scholarship of the archaeologists and their teams who have excavated the objects on display and studied the sites. These publications have alerted scholars in the West to the activity of their Chinese colleagues, and have permitted Western archaeologists to keep knowledge of Chinese antiquity up to date. Archaeological finds have been published both carefully and rapidly, often as preliminary notices in journals fol-

lowed by more intensive reports.

The earliest objects in the Exhibition, while visually less exciting than most of the later materials, are some of the most meaningful in terms of our growing knowledge of man and his origins. The finds of Peking Man suggest a direct relationship with later populations in the same area who still exhibit some of his physical characteristics. Peking Man remains better known than his recently discovered relative, Lantian Man, who seems to have lived rather earlier and has been assigned an approximate age of 600,000 years. We are left to imagine the cultural condition of these ancestral men from a few heavy tools, but evidence of the use of fire is suggestive of some appreciation of the rudimentary creature comforts.

Even more dramatic have been finds during the last 25 years from the neolithic period when men became settled farmers. Until recent years it was impossible to reconstruct an accurate picture of the development of these farming communities and local cultures in ancient China because only a few sites had been excavated. Now, however, the patterns of early settlement are much more clearly defined, and knowledge of the crops grown, the kind of domesticated animals used for food, and the living conditions of the people is considerable. We know that many of them lived in reasonable com-









*Facing page: Shang Dynasty glazed vase, 11" high, c. 1500 B.C.—one of the earliest high-fired glazed ceramics made by man. Excavated in 1965 near Zhengzhou, Henan Province.*

*Left: A model of the head of Lantian Man, one of the earliest inhabitants of China. Parts of his skull were excavated at Lantian near Sian, northern China.*

fort, in snug and well-designed houses, and took good advantage of the natural conditions of the particular areas in which they lived. We also know they produced a wide range of serviceable utensils often decorated with colourful designs or made in imaginative and even amusing shapes. The Exhibition contains a fascinating group of tools and ceramics made by China's early farmers, and some of the efficient tools have an elegance of design that remains artful and impressive today.

The years before the bronze-using Shang Dynasty are grouped by China's historians under the term Primitive Society, but with the advent of metal came a pro-

found change in the social order and the introduction of what the Chinese term Slave Society. The Shang legacy to the Exhibition is a number of superbly cast bronze vessels decorated with a repertoire of snarling animal masks, predatory birds, or stylized beasts with gaping jaws. These animals may reflect the interests of the rulers of the time who were given to holding hunts during which large numbers of wild animals were slaughtered. The Shang are known from historical records to have launched military expeditions against their neighbours, and recent excavations have confirmed the establishment of Shang authority and culture in distant regions. The Exhibition contains

bronzes from some provincial sites in a style based on the metropolitan one current in the capital but also evocative of other places and other traditions.

Later Bronze Age sites have been extensively investigated in recent years. Of particular interest are finds from some of the many minor states which flourished under local rulers during most of the first millennium B.C. Styles range from the sophisticated to the less finished, but most of the pieces on display reflect a mastery of the handling and finishing of cast bronze objects that is a source of wonder to modern experts in the subject. These are aristocratic arts *par excellence*, their finish, subject matter and style reflecting



Facing page: Top: ROM's Chinese Archaeological Research Team whose articles appear in this issue; from left to right, B. Stephen, G. Whincup, C.-H. Hsü, P. Proctor, S. Irwin, D. Dohrenwend. Bottom: Floor plan of the Exhibition at the ROM.

Below: Bone needle, 6½" long, c. 4000 B.C., excavated at Banpo in 1960.



the varying fortunes of the nobility who commissioned them, and the varying skills of the local craftsmen in the different states. A haunting evocation of the lively arts of about 2500 years ago is the sound of a set of bronze bells of the period; this is the sound of past ceremonies, thin and antique, reaching across the centuries because of the durability of the bronze instruments designed to produce it.

The period of Feudal Society begins in the first millennium B.C. and covers the remainder of the Exhibition. It covers the period of the Warring States and of the Qin and Han Dynasties, the time when China moved to the establishment of a strongly centralized government through the agency of a succession of determined rulers. Chinese authority during the Han Dynasty reached farther than ever before, and the Exhibition contains some remarkable finds from both the north-west and the south revealing that people in these areas were being exposed to the mainstream of Chinese culture more than two thousand years ago. There can be no more dramatic statement of the wealth and refinement of the metropolitan arts of the Han Dynasty than the finds from the tombs of the prince of Zhongshan and his princess. The lavishness and profusion of the art objects found in these tombs indicate a life of luxury that is echoed in the provision for the dead in these underground palaces. The jade suits in which this couple was buried are fascinating in several ways; the exquisite workmanship of the ancient craftsmen, requiring years of man-hours to complete; the naive belief that by meeting eternity encased in jade, bodily preservation would be ensured; and the modern awareness that the fortune squandered on these strange garments was drawn from the labour of the workers in this small state.

After the suffocating luxury of these finds it is a relief to look at some of the less overwhelming products of Han craftsmanship,

particularly the unique parade of bronze horses and carts. Han interest in good horses was exceeded only in the later Tang Dynasty, but animated three-dimensional representations of horses are rare in Han. The static beasts harnessed to the carriages form a striking contrast to the unique "flying" horse. The artist who modelled the original horse created a work highly unusual in its time; balanced on one hoof, this animal paces through time like some heavenly charger borne magically on the back of a bird.

The later sections of the Exhibition are housed in areas that continue the emphasis on groupings of objects from individual finds. Notable is the treasury containing pieces from a hoard of gold and silver objects found in 1970 in suburban Sian. A group of burial figures from the tomb of the young princess Yongtai is accompanied by a copy of a wall painting from the antechamber of her tomb. Nearby is a superb horse from the tomb of a male relative who died around the same date, all of these figures in the vigorously naturalistic style of the early eighth century. These exhibits give an important insight into life in the Tang capital—the burial figures modelled after the people and animals active in a dynamic moment in Chinese history, the hoard suggestive of the grandeur of the furnishings of a great noble house of the time.

The ceramics featured in the exhibits from the tenth century and Song Dynasty contrast in their simplicity of form and decoration with the richly ornamental character of the Tang objects. Visitors alert to the history of Chinese ceramics will have noted the glazed and hard-fired vase from the Shang site of Zhengzhou, dated mid-second millennium B.C., which is the modest ancestor of the fine green-glazed wares of the tenth century and later. Some of the Yuan Dynasty pieces are again reminiscent of Tang in the use of rich decoration, now executed in brilliant underglaze blue.

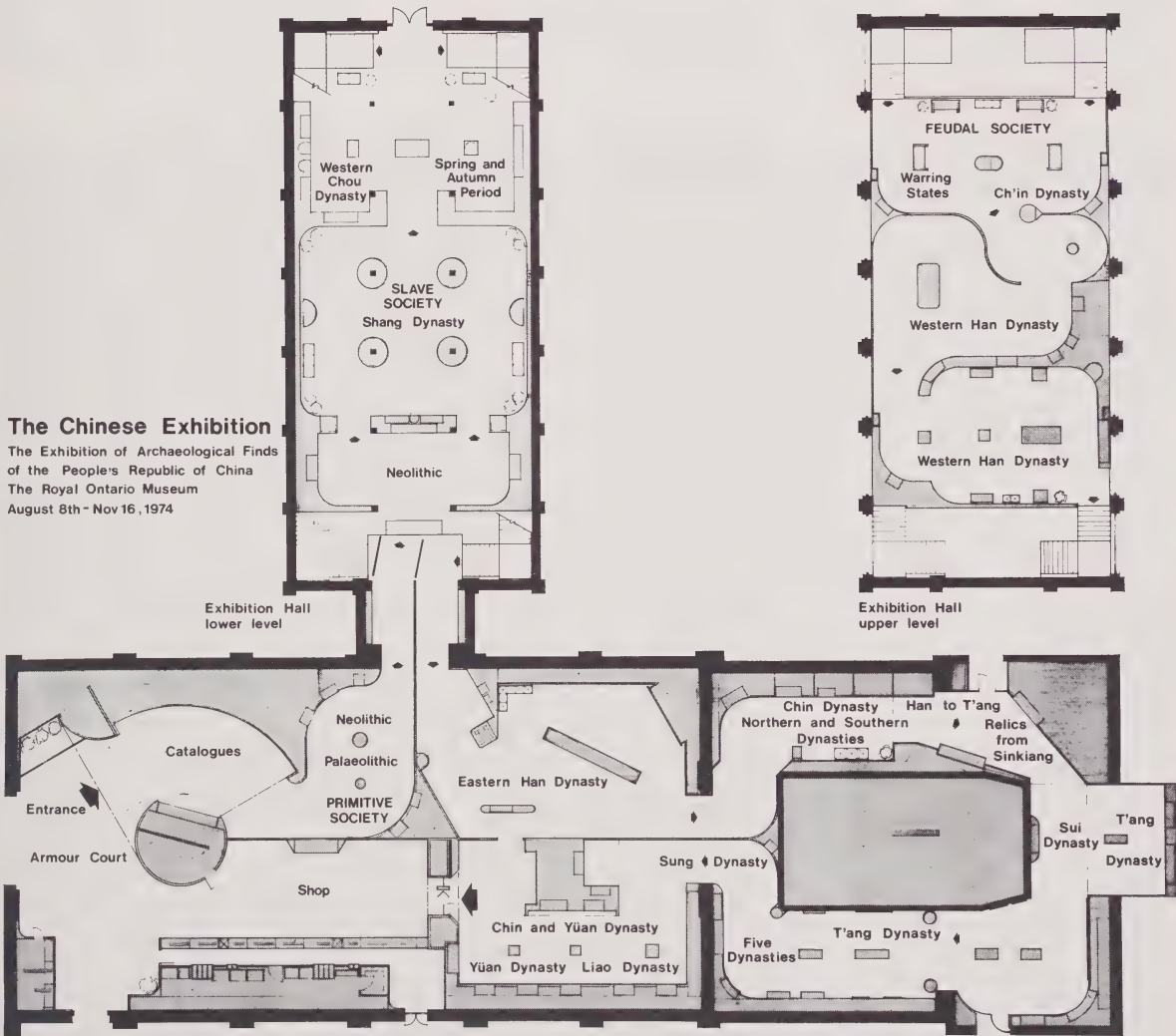


The Exhibition merits not one visit but many. For this timely issue of *Rotunda*, members of the Far Eastern Department who have been working on the Exhibition have made a selection of pieces that reflect their involvement with particular aspects of the ROM's own collections, and their descriptions which follow give some idea of the wealth of information associated with each of the 385 objects on display.



## The Chinese Exhibition

The Exhibition of Archaeological Finds of the People's Republic of China  
The Royal Ontario Museum  
August 8th - Nov 16, 1974





The ritual bronze vessels from the Shang Dynasty (c. 1523-1028 B.C.) are among the most fascinating and perplexing objects ever made in metal. This particular example in the form of a monster comes from the border of Shansi and Shensi Provinces, and is just one of the many vessels excavated in recent years from sites far removed from Anyang in Henan Province, which was the last capital of the Shang Kings (c. 1300-1028 B.C.).

This type of vessel is called a *Guang*. It was probably used either to heat or hold wine offered to the spirits of the ancestors dur-

ing sacrifices. Its shape and decoration are most unusual. The ornament on bronzes dating from the latter part of the Shang Dynasty is as a general rule symmetrically arranged, covering nearly the entire surface of the vessel, and the background is filled with a spiral motif.

The *taotie* mask plays an important part in the design on the majority of vessels of this period. It is the mask of an imaginary animal which according to later literature had evil-averting powers; it is usually divided down the centre by a vertical flange and can also be interpreted as two con-

fronting profile dragons. Real animals also form an important part in the composition of the designs, but are so stylized as to be almost unrecognizable. Among the most common are tigers, water buffalo, birds, elephants, cicadas and many forms of dragons. This *Guang* lacks nearly all these features and its decoration is a mixture of realistic and highly stylized animals. On each side is a clearly distinguishable crocodile pursuing a beast with a snake body and dragon head. On the foot are abstracted fish, and below the crocodile and snake-bodied dragon are some strange reptilian

## A Bronze Bestiary

Sara Irwin





creatures. The head is impossible to define as portraying any one particular animal, as it is composed of elements belonging to several beasts: bottle-shaped horns, pointed upturned nose, open mouth with bared teeth and small bulging eyes. When seen from above it has a curving body extending from it down the centre of the lid. Its tail is intertwined with the tail of another snake-bodied dragon. A bird with a hooked beak and a long attenuated body is placed back-to-back with the dragon. On either side of the vessel are two loops, possibly for passing a cord

through in order to suspend it.

The place where the *Guang* was found is on what is understood to have been the borders of the Shang domain and the territory belonging to the Zhou people, who overthrew the Shang Dynasty in about 1028 B.C. Although very little is known about the Zhou before they conquered the Shang, the existing evidence points to the fact that they had their own artistic tradition, and one explanation for the style of the *Guang* is that it is a synthesis of Shang and Zhou art. But this cannot be proved definitely until more is known about the early Zhou.

The discovery of these provincial bronzes of Shang date from sites as far away as Changning in the South of China, proves that the knowledge of bronze casting and the influence of Shang art extended over a much wider area of China than was previously thought. Like the *Guang* they all display their own peculiar characteristics, which proves they were not sent from the Anyang vicinity but manufactured locally. This extraordinary *Guang* is just one of the many beautiful and mysterious bronze vessels in the Chinese Exhibition which demonstrate the skill of the Shang craftsmen.







## Two Shang Dynasty Oracle Bones

Chin-hsiung Hsü

The so-called "oracle bone inscriptions" are records, mainly of divinations, written on animal scapulae (almost always those of cattle in this particular period) and tortoise shells. They were inscribed in the Shang Dynasty during a period of about 273 years, from the transfer of the capital to Anyang by the King Pangeng (c. 1301 B.C.) until the Zhou conquest that ended the Dynasty (c. 1028 B.C.). The practice of bone divination was earlier than shell divination and existed throughout Northern China during the late neolithic period. Even to-day, some minority races in China still practice bone divination, but with the exception of a few pieces only during the Shang Dynasty were the bones inscribed.

The discovery of oracle bone inscriptions in 1899 was of the utmost importance for current studies in ancient Chinese history. It proved the previously unverified existence of the Shang Dynasty and the accuracy, right down to genealogical detail, of historical documents referring to it. Studies have revealed that some of the tortoise shells used in Shang times came from as far away as the Malaysian Peninsula, indicating contact between these two distant areas.

The subjects on which the

Shang people asked questions are numerous: the offering of sacrifice, the fortune of the coming night or week, hunting, travelling, military expeditions, enemy invasion, the appointment of officers, the weather, sickness, astronomical phenomena, agricultural affairs, dreams and even the sex of unborn babies. These provide us with a huge amount of information concerning their daily life and social structure, and the relationship between the Shang and their neighbours.

The omen was read from the crack that formed in the bone after it was singed with a heated point. In the beginning, the bone was merely singed, but in later times, in order that a vertical crack with a horizontal spur might form, various shapes of hollows were chiselled into the bone, most into the reverse face. The shapes of these hollows provide clues for dating.

Whether an omen was good or not depended on an agreement made between the diviner and the spirit of the bone. For example, the agreement might be made that if the horizontal spur pointed upward it was a good omen and if it pointed downward it was bad.

A complete divination sentence inscription contained four parts: the date of divination, the question, the judgement of the omen,

and the actual result. In most cases the last two parts were omitted.

Few oracle bones have survived intact, and it is rare that a whole cow scapula can be reconstructed from its pieces. The two that will be displayed here this summer were among 21 excavated in December 1971 at Anyang, the ancient capital. From the calligraphy, sentence structure and the style of the chiselled hollows, we know they were made in the reign of the King Wenwuding, traditionally believed to have ruled from c. 1226-1214 B.C. These dates may have to be revised because a piece of charcoal from the same pit was dated by the Carbon 14 method to  $1115 \pm 90$  B.C..

The inscriptions on these two bones concern the offering by specific rituals of sacrificial animals to the ancestors of the Royal Family. One of the sentences asks to whom to pray for help in getting rid of the illness of someone named Chen.

"Will it be all right to perform the Yu Ceremony for Chen to Father Yi, Zi and Mother Ren with pigs?"

We will never know whether or not Chen recovered, but it is from such scraps of information that much detail can be added to our understanding of Shang life and times.







# Paradise Tube

Doris Dohrenwend





The 10½-inch long bronze tube or pole-sheath illustrated here, thought to have been a chariot ornament, is not unique in type. It is one of the most exquisite of its kind, however, and probably the most sure of provenance (Ding Xian in Hebei Province) and approximate date (Western Han Dynasty, 1st century B.C.).

The tomb and temple bronzes of the late Shang Dynasty from Anyang, such as the bronze bestiary described above, are tense in form, and charged with magico-religious feeling despite their static designs. Zhou Dynasty bronzes, on the other hand, many with longer and historically important inscriptions, had settled, by the 9th-8th centuries B.C. into a heavier formalism appropriate for use in feudal and state affairs. In the Late Eastern Zhou or Warring States Period of the 5th-3rd centuries B.C., the reign of bronze was over. Although bronzes continued to be cast, iron came increasingly into use. On some Late Zhou bronze vessels we can see, in their formalistic inlaid designs, beginnings of a taste for pure luxury rather than concern for religious and state ritual. On others are early pictorial efforts; reflections, no doubt, of lost works on walls and on silk. The tube in the Exhibition is notable for its blend of the Late Zhou inlaid bronze technique with a new passion for a more complex, semi-pictorial art, and also for its inclusion, in what is still a design with old mythical, but still potent, creatures of China's Bronze Age, of a new repertoire of real animal types—nearly all, moreover, in motion.

The material of the tube is bronze, but this is richly inlaid with gold, silver and turquoise, resulting in a densely "brocaded" surface effect. The decoration is organized in four bands or registers separated by simple mouldings, with a fluted band about the centre. The tube is finished above and below with Han zigzag or dog-tooth borders. Depressed circles and lozenges accent the

whole evenly. Each register offers a mythical, probably Taoist, celestial scene.

The largest figure in the top register is a relatively realistic rendering of a ponderous elephant—ridden, however, by three masked humans or *xian* immortals, curiously large-nosed and sporting antennae. Other chief animals here are a Chinese Pegasus or winged horse, a bear, and a dragon. Birds, hare, deer and feathered *xian* fly about and cavort in the "landscape"—an abstract space defined by gold-inlaid arabesques, evolved from Late Zhou dragon scrolls and readable as clouds or mountains of a definitely "other" world.

Most interesting in the second register from the top is a horse in flying gallop ridden by a suavely-capped figure turned right around backward in a "Parthian shot" at an oncoming tiger. This may be a Sinicization of more realistic West Asian scenes of royal hunts. The setting in all bands of decoration is similar. Owl, stag, ram, goat and wild boar are included this time in the animal inventory. The fringed, plant-like forms occur in other Han Dynasty compositions and are often interpreted as the Plant of Immortality (later, Fungus or Mushroom of Immortality) sought by Taoist adepts and others concerned with eternal life.

In the third scene, below the centre of the tube, is a top-knotted rider of that "ship of the desert" which emerged in Han art—the Bactrian or two-humped camel. The fourth and lowermost register is the most distinguished in the purely ornamental sense, as its featured creature is a giant peacock with a great fanning tail, its long thin legs overstepping the inevitable, if small, Han bear. The setting and tone is again that almost electrically energized wonderland of Han lacquer, bronze, wall and tomb art never before and never quite again presented with such élan, imagination and formal refinement.





白印源送利左洵德音白印源子奉  
到是若此弘不送取幸取白家財  
及子平為我直仍指日子前能用  
依幣手東西不在一印妻光到是  
依立而和立契按本為記

依立左

取依之白印源

依之白印源

依之白印源

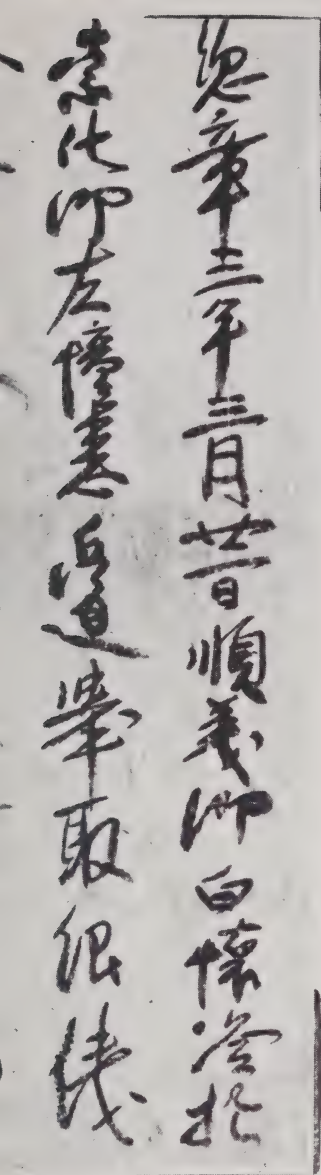
依之白印源

依之白印源

## A Seventh-century Loan Agreement

Greg Whincup





During the Tang Dynasty (A.D. 618-907) Turfan, in China's far western province of Xinjiang, was a major stage on the "Silk Road," the caravan trail along which Chinese silks travelled to Western Asia and to Europe. Recent construction of new irrigation canals at Astana, near Turfan, led to the discovery of over 150 tombs dating from about A.D. 250 to A.D. 750. These tombs were excavated by Chinese archaeologists between 1963 and 1969. Examples of the greatest treasures found in them are included in the Chinese Exhibition: silks, the very silks for which China was then renowned throughout Eurasia, and paper manuscripts.

Various sorts of manuscripts were found. Such government records as a register of the names, dependents, and land holdings of every householder in the town; tax records; records of government land distribution; records of government grain storage; the official complaint of a man that his house had been robbed, along with the testimony of his maid; and even what amounts to the time sheets of workers in a government vineyard. A large number of the manuscripts are private documents: a rent-collection notice, a lease on some land, contracts for the purchase of hay and of slaves, and agreements for the loan of money and of silk cloth.

The photograph shows a loan agreement which is part of the Exhibition. It reads:

21st day of the 3rd year of the Zongzhang Period (16 April 670) Bai Huailuo of Shunyi Village borrows from Zuo Dongxi of Chonghua Village ten (10) pieces of silver at a monthly interest of one (1) piece of silver, interest payable on the 21st of each month. When Zuo requires the money, Bai must repay principal and interest forthwith. If he delays and does not repay it, Zuo may take Bai's household effects and livestock as he wishes to the value

of the money. Or he may take livestock... as collateral. If the debtor is not present his wife and children are responsible for repayment to the value of the money. The two parties agree to this contract and make their marks as a sign thereof:

Lender	Zuo Dongxi
Borrower	Bai Huailuo
Guarantor	Yan Shiluo
Witness	Zhang Zhidian
Witness	Su Wenda

Bai Huailuo owes Zu Dongxi one (1) good date tree.

Chinese farmers, like many Canadian farmers, often lived much of the year on credit. They had to borrow for seed and tools in the spring, and at such a rate of interest—here it is 120% p.a.—that in the Fall they had to sell so much of their produce to repay the loan that a new loan became necessary. And so on.

This contract was recovered with many others from the tomb of Zuo Dongxi. Zuo's official position was that of an officer of the border guard; he was also a usurer. In the large number of contracts and agreements found in his tomb we see him buying slaves and other commodities and lending money and silk at 10% and 15% per month. Bai Huailuo was evidently a regular customer; four years earlier, on 4 January 666, he had borrowed 24 pieces of silver.

In many cases, land was put up as surety on the loan, and bad years saw many farmers lose all or part of their land to their creditors. Their hardships, it must be said, did not go entirely unnoticed. Official reports were made, and occasionally orders would come down cancelling both private debts and tax debts. Zuo, however, had a solution to that: some of his loan agreements had provisions that specifically excluded them from such amnesties.









# Prince Yide's Horse

Patricia Proctor

News of the incomparable "blood-sweating" horses of Ferghana reached China in the late second century B.C. when Zhang Qian returned from his mission to western Asia. The rugged ponies of the steppes could not hope to compete in the mind of the Chinese with these elegant long-legged steeds from Transoxiana. They were prized through the centuries and in the Tang Dynasty (A.D. 618-907) horses were brought from such places as Samarkand and Bukhara to improve the native stock. When the dynasty came to power there were only 5,000 horses in the pasture lands of Gansu, and horse breeding became a government concern. By mid-century their number had increased to 706,000. Most were bought and bartered from the Turkic peoples to the north but others, more exotic, were brought by foreign envoys from as far away as the Arab lands. Horses played their role in Tang diplomacy. In 643, 50,000 grizzled black-maned horses were presented by the Sirtardush Turks upon the conclusion of an alliance with China. When diplomacy failed and China went to war with her nomadic neighbours, horses were indispensable in carrying men and supplies. They also imparted status, and horsemanship was considered to be an aristocratic privilege. Tang courtiers hunted and played polo on horses specially selected for the Imperial Stables, but in 667 an edict was issued prohibiting artisans and merchants from riding.

This horse was excavated in

1972 from the tomb of the grandson of Gaozong and Empress Wu, Prince Yide, in the imperial burial grounds in Qian Xian near Sian. He died in 701 but was not given a burial befitting his rank until several years later when his father was on the throne. The multi-chambered tomb, its walls gaily painted, was lavishly furnished with over 1,000 artifacts.

This horse is one of the finest pieces to come from the tomb. The natural pose and skillful modelling of the powerful musculature are typical of the best tomb figurines of the first half of the eighth century. During this period, figures of robust sculptural quality produced in moulds and finished by hand were covered with the new three-colour glazes to furnish sumptuous tomb retinues for the high-born. The multi-racial population of Changan is portrayed in the figures of foreign traders and servants. Musicians, dancers, polo-players and hunters illustrate the amusements of the aristocracy. Contemporary fashions in dress and coiffure, often from the interior of Asia, are displayed on the elegant court ladies while the more mundane aspects of life are represented by the chickens, ducks and dogs from the farmyards. The camels and their drivers who traversed the Silk Road and brought wealth to Changan reflect the population's interest in foreign exotica. In their variety these tomb figurines reflect Tang life in all its diversity and provide the student with a rich source of information on Tang China.



# Visions of Cathay

*The Mystique of Chinoiserie*





**T**he fabrics of the East have aroused enthusiasm in the West since ancient times. Compared to wool and linen, the silks of China and the cottons of India were unparalleled luxuries. They inspired legend and helped perpetuate the illusive vision of Cathay—that mysterious land, lying just beyond the eastern confines of the known world, inhabited by a quaint people who lingered in gossamer pavilions to drink tea, or dance, or make music within a landscape so beautiful no garden could approach its perfection. In Cathay, it seemed, most European values were turned upside down, in a civilization more elegant and humane than any the West had experienced.

Despite the great distances and ideological differences, trade provided an active interchange of ideas and goods. Oriental culture has had varying degrees of artistic significance in Europe in the centuries since silk first found its way to the markets of Rome. The European vision of Cathay, although inspired by Oriental luxuries, found expression in Western decorative traditions as well. Rarity and expense frequently encouraged Western craftsmen to indulge the taste for the exotic by creating chinoiserie—imitations, suggestions, or evocations of the mystery and luxury of Cathay.

During the first century B.C. China began to send her silks to the West along the famed Silk Road, which wound its way across Asia from the Chinese capital to the shores of the Mediterranean. Although silk passed through the hands of many middlemen, the Romans made no mistake in naming it. For them it was *serica*, from the Greek word for China. Within the next century, a second trade route to the Orient was opened across the Arabian Sea to the markets of southern India. There Roman merchants acquired fine Indian muslins, as well as Chinese





silks brought there by sea around South East Asia, or overland by way of Burma or Bactria. Silk clothes became fashionable in Rome in spite of the cost and the fact that moralists were scandalized by their gauze-like transparency.

Political weakness, barbarian incursions along the Silk Road, piracy in the Red Sea, and the shift of the centre of the empire eastward to Constantinople, did not diminish the demand for silk. During the fifth century, as the risks involved in transport increased, the price of silk rose accordingly, much to the consternation of those who had become accustomed to silk undergarments beneath their woollen togas. Hardship became crisis, when, in the 6th century, the Emperor Justinian fixed the price on imported silks, and the Persian merchants boycotted the Byzantine market in protest. Providentially, "certain monks from Serinda" just then smuggled silkworm eggs and the secrets of sericulture out of China to the West.

Beyond references to garments of sheer silk tissues, mostly woven in Syria from raw silk and silk threads imported from China, our knowledge of silk in Rome is uncertain. What impact Chinese woven silks had in Imperial Rome is unknown. However, the earliest preserved imitation of Chinese art in the West invites speculation. It is a fragment of a 3rd-century fabric, found at Dura-Europos, patterned with a Han style design but proving to be of Syrian manufacture.

From the 7th century, when Islam wedged itself between a weakened West and a reduced China, trade between East and West was seriously curtailed. Until the 13th century any Western vision of Cathay, however dim, was based on the writings of classical historians.

But with the rise of Mongol power in the 12th century, and the creation of an empire which extended from the Pacific to the frontiers of the Levant, trade wit-





Previous page: Chinese porcelain jar, c. 1650, embodying in its blue on white design what Europeans had come to expect of all Chinese porcelain, and an early 18th-century Chinese embroidered scroll with the bird and branch theme which became idiomatic of chinoiserie ornament.

Left: 18th-century Indian painted and resist-dyed cotton palampoor reflecting in the lily motif at lower right (which resembles that in the Chinese embroidery above) the disparate sources supplied to Indian chintz painters serving European markets of the period. Right: English embroidered curtain c. 1700 with the idiomatic flowering tree motif.



nessed a brilliant revival. Throughout the 13th and 14th centuries textiles of finer quality and richer colours than those of Europe began to appear in significant quantity. Many of these highly prized fabrics are preserved in church treasuries.

The excitement caused by these silks stimulated emulation, particularly at Lucca in southern Italy, the leading European silk weaving centre of its day. Here silk designers attempted to capture the spirit of Oriental tissues in fabrics produced for European aristocracy. Animals and birds of Oriental derivation play amid a tangle of foliage, replacing the static arrangements of heraldic animals and noble heroes placed in rigid rows of roundels which had characterized Western textile design since Byzantine times. In time the dragons and phoenix are replaced by more familiar beasts and birds, but once released, the

sensuous energy of flowing patterns based on diagonal arrangements surges through textile designs for the next five hundred years.

Overturn of Mongol rule by the more conservative and inward-looking Ming Chinese, coupled with the rise of Turkish power, again separated Europe from direct contact with the East. During the 14th and 15th centuries only the city state of Venice managed to maintain trade with the Orient. Although Venice was forced to pay dearly for the privilege, the monopoly was extremely profitable.

The desire to break the Venetian monopoly sent explorers from other Western nations in search of access to the Eastern markets. Portugal led the way around Africa to the ports of Asia. In 1489 Vasco da Gama rounded the Cape of Good Hope. Nine years later the Portuguese arrived in Calcutta. Can-

ton was reached in 1517 and Japan in 1542. The latter part of the 16th century brought Spanish ascendancy over Portugal both politically and in the area of Eastern trade, and by the early 17th century the chartered trade companies of Holland and England made inroads into the Eastern trade and quickly over-shadowed their Iberian competitors.

Throughout the 16th and early 17th centuries most Europeans were unable to differentiate what was Chinese from that which was Indian, Japanese, South East Asian, or East Indian. Europeans had come to expect their porcelain to be blue and white, their lacquer ware to be black with lighter coloured ornament, and their fabrics to be gaily coloured on a light ground. The problem was not alleviated by the ubiquitous Oriental craftsmen who willingly changed traditional modes to fill the orders of foreign merchants





Above: Man's embroidered waistcoat, English c. 1700, echoing Chinese export embroideries. Facing page: embroidered coverlet, English early 18th-century, with Chinese-inspired monochromatic sprig design.

demanding visions of Cathay and not reflections of India, China, Japan, or other parts of the East.

Until the 17th century European collections of Oriental objects were rare and in the hands of a very exclusive minority, who prized these objects more as expensive curios than examples of exquisite design. The vast quantities of spices, silks, porcelains, and lacquer which poured into Western ports after 1600 radically altered this pattern. The volume of imports created a popular fashion. Craftsmen of varying skill imitated Oriental decoration found on lacquers, porcelains, and textiles. To supplement these sources of design, particularly for the less affluent, collections of oriental style designs were published and widely circulated. Many of these designs were "improved" and present an extraordinary mixture of Oriental and classical motifs, suitably exotic for the chinoiserie taste.

Increased imports brought greater discrimination. In the 17th century the first connoisseurs of orientalia appear. Interest in things Eastern sparked interest in the Chinese themselves. Travelogues of returning traders and the published journals of Christian missionaries helped correct many half truths and legends surrounding China.

Eastern fabrics became increasingly popular during the 17th century, and trade companies initiated organized textile trade. In 1643 the London directors of the East India Company complained that Indian fabrics sent to Europe were not particularly suited to the English market. The mordant painted and resist-dyed cottons traditionally reserved light designs against coloured grounds, but the "sad red grounds" were "not so well accepted." It was soon apparent that the only way to secure production of goods totally acceptable to the European markets was to send out patterns to India to be copied. Interestingly, these patterns were not in an English style, but based on ornament



in the Chinese taste, reflecting mid-century English expectation of what Eastern fabrics should ideally look like. The success of this venture is readily assessed by protests of European textile industries and attempts of the French and English governments to ban the importation of chintz in the late 17th and early 18th centuries.

The court of Louis XIV was instrumental in the spread of chinoiserie across Europe. The now destroyed *Trianon de Porcelaine*, a pleasure pavilion built for Madame de Montespan in 1670, was decorated with faience tiles with a blue and white colour scheme and hung with Chinese embroidered curtains. It summed up the exotic magnificence with which the French imbued the Chinese. The exotic style appealed to the contemporary French taste for allegory and symbolism which, by association, hinted at the universal sway of Sun King, for China was a great and magnificent empire whose emperor also ruled by divine favour. Financially, chinoiserie aided the court. The king was able

to acquire the best Oriental wares quite inexpensively, while private collectors were forced to buy at exorbitant prices. By encouraging French craftsmen to create chinoiseries for this inflated market, the crown stimulated the economy.

Chinoiseries of the Baroque period stressed the magnificence and opulence of an imagined Orient. A light veneer of exotic embellishment was sufficient to transform the pomp and majesty of European ornament into a vision of Cathay. A few pagods perched on classical strapwork added Oriental flavour to any textile design.

During the reign of Louis XV chinoiserie assumed another face. Wit and elegance replaced formality and opulence. French court painters developed a whimsical vision of Cathay. One of the most amusing products of this era is a set of chinoiserie tapestries made at Beauvais after cartoons prepared by the painter Boucher, which hung in the private apartments of Madame de Pompadour. The king commissioned a second

set which was sent to China. The reaction of the Ch'ien-lung emperor is not recorded, but one tapestry was still hanging in the summer palace at the time of the Boxer Rebellion and is now preserved in the Cleveland Museum.

The designs of the painter and draftsman Pillement well capture the spirit of Rococo chinoiserie. Many of his charming scenes were incorporated into designs for printed textiles, which no longer attempted to suggest the luxury of Eastern fabrics, but simply presented fantasy visions of Cathay.

Throughout the 17th and 18th centuries chinoiserie retained a very intimate flavour. From the major chinoiserie monuments built for French court favourites to the less ambitious, but equally sensuous, chintz-hung boudoirs of English "ladies of taste," the chinoiserie style evoked hedonistic escape. In decorative terms it realized a vision of Cathay where sensuous pleasure was to be found in every diverse place. The glossiness of lacquer, the handsome shapes and clear colours of porcelain, and the glowing tones of





lustrous silks have immediate tactile appeal. By association they conjure the opulence and magnificence of a world remote in time and space where seraglio, tea gardens, and court pageantry were a way of life and not simply diversions.

17th-century chinoiserie were based largely on undifferentiated notions of the East; exotic motifs were superimposed on the Baroque structures of the decorative arts. 18th-century decorators, on the other hand, threw increased knowledge of the actual Orient to the wind to celebrate the fantasy of a make-believe world inhabited by a pleasure-seeking, frivolous people dwelling in a never-never land of perpetual spring, where music wafting on a gentle breeze stirred unfading peonies and where picnic and dance continued unabated in the timeless afternoon.

By the late 18th century European attitudes towards the Orient began to change. Neo-classicism brought sobriety and restraint to the arts. The archaeological spirit which prevailed the neo-classical movement also applied more dis-

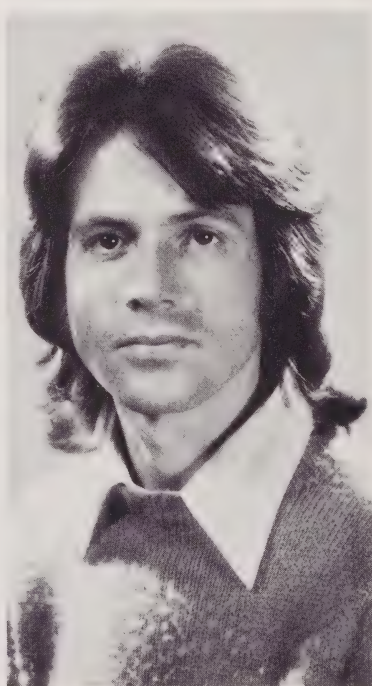
cerning and critical approaches to the Orient. For the first time accurate illustrations of the Chinese scene were widely circulated, revealing a world far different from the fantasies of Boucher and Pillement. As a result many late 18th-century chinoiseries maintain a faithfulness to genuine Chinese objects. Printed textile designs derived from the illustrations of William Chambers, designer of Kew Gardens, present stately figures who cope, as we must, with the physical laws of the universe.

By the 19th century China stood revealed in Western eyes as a backward country, sorely lacking the necessary institutions for commercial and political success. Yet the vision of Cathay survived. Oriental objects continued to be imported in great quantity to fill Victorian homes. Chinoiserie remained popular, if not so fashionable as they once had been.

The present century has witnessed an explosion of knowledge about China and its people, and increased appreciation of their philosophy, history and art. The first pre-Ming ceramics, paint-

ings, and sculptures to reach Europe in the late 19th century were greeted with puzzled surprise. Little did they reflect the vision of Cathay which had been recorded and preserved in chinoiserie. Only as sinologists revealed the complexity of China's artistic heritage and its long history of civilization did it become apparent that nearly all the Chinese objects exported to Europe since the 15th century were carefully designed to satisfy Western expectations of Oriental art. The Cathay of legend and travellers' tales is revealed as a European vision; however, this vision still exerts influence on us. The recent recognition of the People's Republic of China by the United Nations sparked a rash of Chinese inspired designs from fashionable apparel to reinterpretations of Rococo bedrooms. At this point one may well ask what effect the forthcoming Chinese Archaeological Exhibition will have on the West. The promise of a fuller understanding of China's rich archaeological past also invokes enchantment with the mysterious, exotic East.

Mr. Vollmer joined the Museum staff in 1968 as a secretary to the Far Eastern Department where he worked with the Japanese collection. Four years ago he transferred to the Textile Department to work with one of the major public holdings of Chinese costumes and fabrics. His researches in Oriental textiles range from the study of ancient Chinese weaving as preserved in the patinas of bronze objects, to East-West trade relations during the 16th and 17th centuries. The theme of this article will be the focus of a special exhibition of chinoiserie fabrics to be displayed in the second floor galleries from August 2 to November 16, as a complementary experience for visitors to the Exhibition of Archaeological Finds of the People's Republic of China.



*Early 18th-century Indian cotton panel, based on a French design in the Bérain style, the little pagods in the corners appealing to chinoiserie taste.*







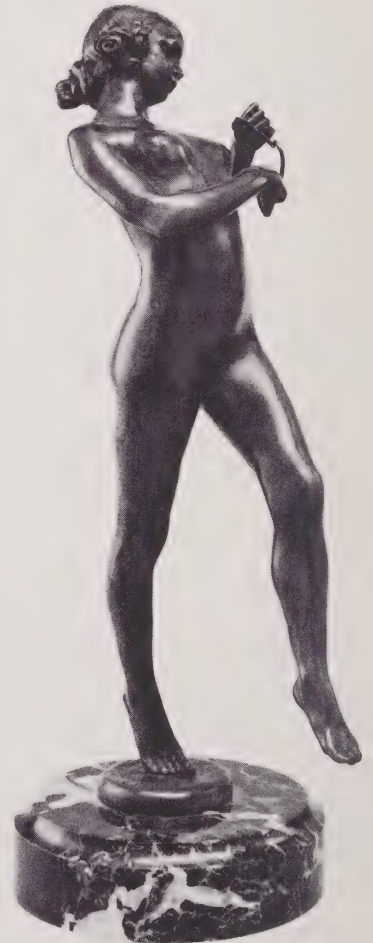
# The Growing Collections



In northern China clothing was designed to counteract the effects of a harsh winter. The practice of wadding garments with cotton or silk floss for insulation from the wind and cold continues today. From descriptions, paintings and documents, we know that fur-lined garments were common among the upper classes of traditional China; however, few of these costumes have survived. The recent gift of a woman's informal coat fills a long existing gap in the Chinese collections. This sumptuous coat is made of green silk damask and is entirely lined with downy soft Mongolian lamb; its collar is edged with squirrel.

The European Department's collection of bronze statuettes takes on new dimensions with the recent acquisition of a group of six dancing Bacchic figures with musical instruments, each figure bearing on its base the signature, "E. Piron." Eugène Desiré Piron is a shadowy figure in the development of modern sculpture. He was born in Dijon in 1875 and died by his own hand in 1928 at Aix-en-Provence. A member of the Société des Artistes Français, Piron exhibited numerous works at the Paris Salon early in this century, with a growing interest in classical themes emerging in his work during the years from 1906 up to the time of the First World

War. This is evident in the "Faune et Nymphe" and "Faunesse" exhibited at the Salon of 1911, and in the Dijon Museum's bronze "Faunesse aux Pipeaux," signed and dated Rome 1906, and the wooden "Bacchus Ivre," signed and dated 1908. The six dancing figures now in our collection most probably date from the period 1906-1912, when Piron was developing classical themes. These are in harmony with the *Zeitgeist* of the period which saw a growing interest in the dance,





reflected in sculpture in the small bronzes of Degas, and on the stage in the appearance of the Ballet Russe (1912 saw Nijinski's first dance, Debussy's "Afternoon of a Faun," at the Chatelet Theatre, Paris, on the same programme as Stravinsky's "Rite of Spring") and of the Terpsichorean achievements of Isadora Duncan.

Technically, the six Piron statuettes show a multi-coloured patina, perhaps a reflection of one of Piron's teachers, Barrias, who was noted for his use of combined patinas.



The European Department has recently acquired a fine example of a Central European rococo style clock produced at the Vienna Factory, c. 1760. The clock case, 29.5 cm. high, is of undecorated white porcelain which shows to advantage the modelling of the four fauns engaged in festooning rococo scrolls with grapes. The four scrolls framing the clock face are reminiscent of the earlier baroque which is characteristic of the Vienna Factory's somewhat reactionary approach to design.

This clock is a major addition to the Museum's collection of Conti-

nental ceramics, which already includes several comparable pieces of Vienna porcelain in white. The movement, which is in working order, is French, and perhaps slightly later than the case. After minor repairs and cleaning by the Conservation Department, it is now ready to take its place in the new Clock Gallery when it opens.





# Doorways to Antiquity



## *Early Iranian Settlements Surrender Some of Their Secrets*

Louis D. Levine

**I**t all seemed very familiar when we returned to Seh Gabi in May 1973. We had managed to rent the same house in the town of Kangavar that we had occupied during the 1971 season, the same workmen came out of the village to greet us and sign on to the crew, and little had changed on the landscape. We had even managed to bring back all of the professional staff from the 1971 season, although this time we had augmented it with three others, so we had high hopes of getting a lot more done this season.

But we are getting ahead of ourselves. Readers of *Rotunda* will remember that the ROM's Godin

Project had seen its first season of excavation at the site of Seh Gabi from May to August in the summer of 1971 (*Rotunda*, Winter, 1973). At that time, we had learned that the site was composed of six separate mounds, and that these represented early village settlements in western Iran dating from about 5000-3200 B.C. Most of our work had been concentrated on the settlements that were occupied in the earlier part of this time range, and we had managed to clear at least one house from about 3800 B.C. But the end of that first season had left us very unsatisfied. We knew a great deal more than we had known

when we started, but so many questions remained unanswered that we knew we would have to return. And so, there we were, two years later, same time, same station.

This year, however, we were determined to excavate two of the other mounds extensively, in the hope of getting a good deal more information about the period between 3800 and 3200 B.C. We suspected that this information would be found on Mounds A and E, so it was there that we put in our initial soundings. Mary McDonald began work on Mound A, while Carol Hamlin, Bram van As, Isobel Heathcote and Lee



Horne started on Mound E. Surface indications from the mound and some test trenches put in during the 1971 season indicated that Mound E, although the smaller of the two, was occupied for a longer period of time. Hence the relative disparity in the size of the staff assigned to each. We would make quick work of E, and then move on to other things on A, and perhaps elsewhere at Seh Gabi.

Somehow, we had forgotten the lesson of the first season. Simply stated, it is that whatever the plans you made for Seh Gabi, do otherwise once you get there. We opened an area of some 200 square metres on Mound E in the first weeks. As any good archaeologist knows, it is virtually impossible to open this much area without encountering structural remains of some sort. But for reasons still unclear the uppermost levels on the mound were devoid of any such structures. Not only that, but the first things which we did find belonged to the same period as the

material from Mound A, where Mary was working by her lonesome self. It appeared that we were not to find any material from the time range 3500-3200, aside from some broken sherds and an occasional stone wall foundation. Nevertheless, we decided to press on, and we were eventually rewarded with a set of badly preserved walls dating to about 3600 B.C. Unfortunately, these were poorly built, and so hard to see that it was only with the most excruciatingly patient work that they began to emerge. The entire area had to be excavated literally with a small hand pick and a set of paint-brushes.

But archaeology is full of surprises, sometimes from the most unexpected quarters. During the 1971 season, we had put a small trench into Mound A and found little evidence of any structures. Mary, during the first weeks of excavation, had managed to find a few scruffy walls, but nothing to excite the imagination. But just as

*Facing page: The doorways of the burned room on Mound A. The feature against the wall is a storage bin.*

*Below: Features of the Godin landscape, looking east across the top of Mound B.*





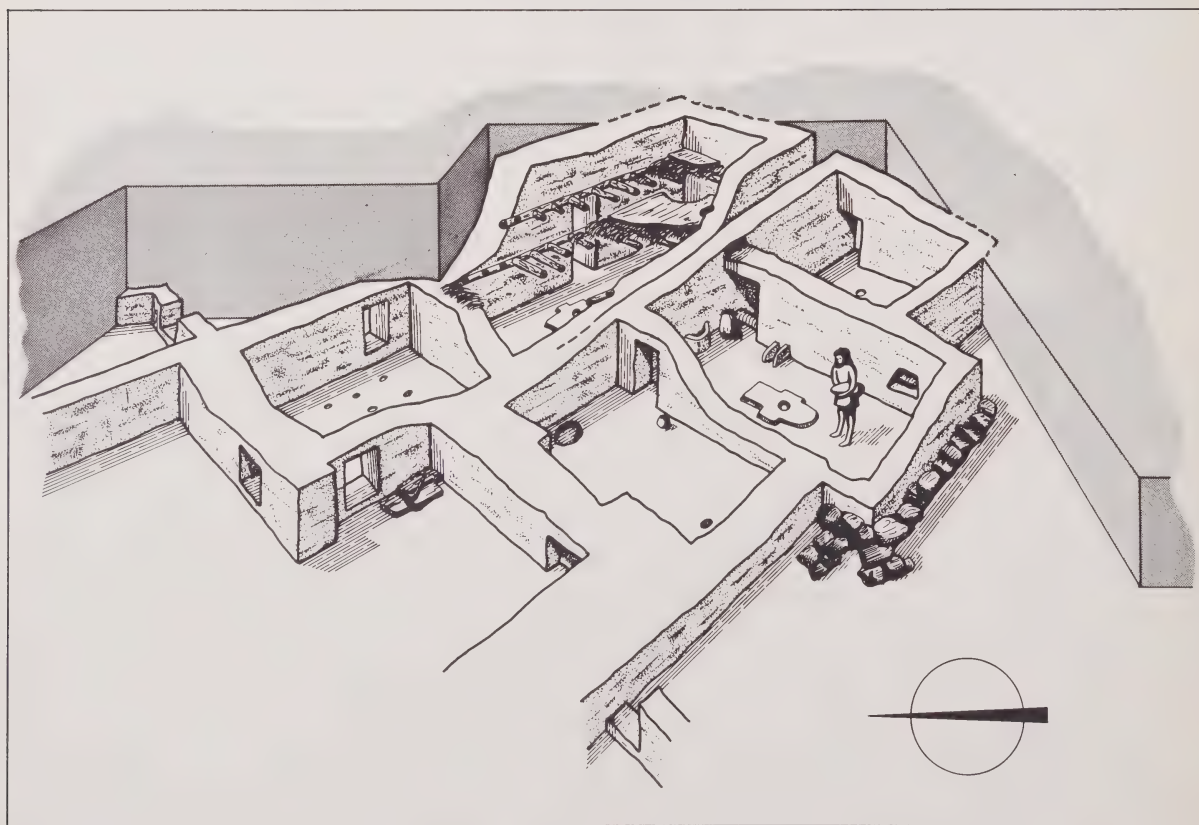
we began to realize that the results from Mound E, while possibly very important, were hardly spectacular. Mary came upon a burned wall and began to dig down to find the floor. She finally reached it, some 5½ feet later, and we knew that we had something important. As we emptied the room of its debris, a number of things began to come clear. The room had been burned, and the beams of the roof had collapsed onto the floors to be found as a mass of charcoal. Afterward, the standing walls had been used as a garbage dump. They were filled with trash and animal bones, and the deposit looked like that found today in similar abandoned structures in modern villages. As we cleared the floor of the room, we found a raised clay hearth in the centre, in the shape of a cross with a hole in its centre. This was virtually identical to hearths that we found in the poorly preserved structures on Mound E, and this along with the

similar pottery assured us that the two sounds were roughly contemporary in date.

The room held other surprises. When we came to the northern corner, we found that the doorway was fully preserved, including the lintel, and that it lead into yet another room to the east. At this point, we decided to switch the majority of our force to clearing the Mound A building, leaving only Carol to continue excavating in her "sculpture garden," as these poorly preserved walls on Mound E came to be called.

The preview into the stratigraphy of the burned room led us to suspect that the other rooms might have been similarly treated, and when we began to clear the room to the north of the burned room, we felt sure that we were correct in our assumption. Here we found the deposit sloping in to the middle of the room from both walls, as if trash were being poured in from above. We finally

came down to a layer of decayed reed matting, a rather strange phenomenon for a garbage dump which we found hard to explain. Our hypothesis was that we were dealing with an old reed mat that had been discarded on top of the trash, but some second sense led us to proceed carefully and slowly. The puzzle became more complex when we found another of the cruciform type hearths above the reed mat in the centre of this "dump," a rather unlikely place to cook. Just how the situation became clear when it did is still somewhat of a mystery, but one day, as we stood contemplating our "dump" and talking about it, all of the clues clicked into place. What we had was not a dump, nor a discarded reed mat. We were looking at the upper storey of a building that had sagged in the middle. The reed mat had been laid over the beams which supported the third storey floor, and the holes for the beams





were clearly visible in the walls. The hearth was just like the others we had found, but this time it was situated in the centre of an upper storey floor. Our puzzle was solved, but our amazement only grew, for it is an almost unheard of event in archaeology for the upper floors of a building to be preserved.

By the end of the season, we had excavated a total of 10 rooms in the building. None of the others had upper storeys preserved, but the structure was nevertheless most imposing. Walls stood to a height of six feet in some places, six complete doorways were preserved, and the whole structure was contemporary with the poor material found on Mound E. It will still be some time before we manage to analyze all of the pottery and other material found in these structures, but from the architecture alone it is possible to suggest that we have here an indication of the growth of a class structure in society. It has long been suspected that such a development was taking place in neighbouring lowland Mesopotamia at this time, but evidence for its presence on the Iranian plateau had heretofore been lacking. Thus, we had added a significant piece of information to the history of man's social development.

While we were exercising ourselves over the large building on Mound A, Mary had moved off to yet another of the mounds at Seh Gabi. We had taken note of Mound C during the 1971 season, and collected some of the surface pottery. But the mound was so small, rising less than a metre from the surrounding fields, and the pottery so unfamiliar, that we had not paid it much notice. During the ensuing two years, however, we became more and more intrigued by this mound, and so we decided to test it. Once again, fate smiled upon us, and soon after Mary began excavating she came upon the walls which indicate house remains. By the time the season ended, and it ended on Mound C, we had a small alley-way separating two

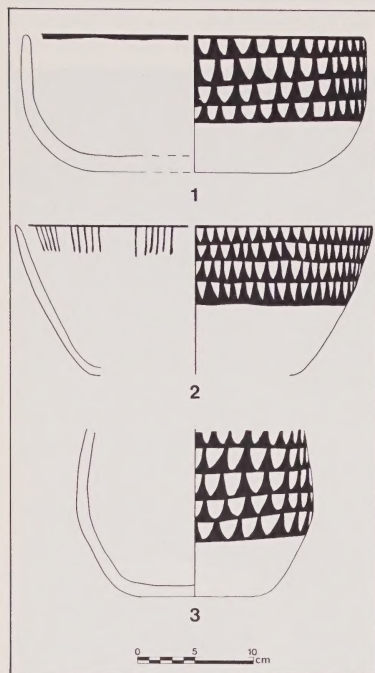
*Facing page: A perspective reconstruction of the Mound A building. Note the cutaway section of the three-storey room at top-right, and the two cruciform hearths.*

*Below: The room in Mound C. The concrete-like bin is at the top; the plastered hearth is the semi-circular structure against the wall to the right.*





Three examples of the previously unknown pottery from Mound C.



houses, and we also had the earliest remains yet discovered in the Kangavar valley. We are still unsure of the date of this settlement, but have provisionally assigned it to the period 6000-5500 B.C. The pottery, now that we have more of it, is no more familiar than when we had but a few sherds. Nothing like it has ever turned up in the area before. But we know that it cannot fall after 5000 B.C., for from that point onward we have a good picture of the sequence of cultures in the valley, and we also know that it must predate the Dalma period by some time, for at Godin there is yet another previously unknown period under the Dalma levels. Until we have tested the Radiocarbon samples from Mound C, we cannot be any more certain of the date than this.

The houses on Mound C were made of pressed mud, and contained few features. In one room, we found a series of bins made of a clay and gravel mixture that was almost as hard as concrete, and here and elsewhere on this mound we came upon a strange hearth with a floor that was plastered over a pebble layer. But life was relatively simple, and aside from the pottery and a few stone implements, little else was found. We do know that these people herded sheep, goats and pigs, and supplemented their diet with hunting. It is also reasonable to assume that they grew various crops, but the analysis of the botanical material is just now beginning.

The excavations at Seh Gabi are now at an end. We have not answered all of the questions posed

by the site, but it is questionable if we could do so even if we were to continue there for the next twenty years. What we have done is nonetheless impressive. We have added some 3000 years to the sequence of man's settlement in this important part of the world. We have been able to document the growing dependence of the settlers in this valley upon the resources they could control, and the concomitant decrease in hunting and gathering as a source of food supply. We have a picture of an ever-increasing social complexity, with the eventual emergence of classes in the period 3700-3500 B.C. We know a great deal more about the history of various technologies, including architecture, metallurgy, and animal husbandry, to say nothing of pottery. And finally, we have an emerging picture of the complexity of man's settlement on the Iranian plateau in late prehistory. We can show that the pattern of cultural connections was a constantly shifting one, and that any neat picture that we are tempted to draw will be simplistic.

But most important, we have provided a base from which we can proceed to ask much more important questions, questions that involve not only describing man's behaviour but also explaining why he did what he did when he did it. It is this last concern that has more than passing antiquarian interest, for to understand man and his motivations in the past is, one hopes, to gain insight into man and his behaviour today. And God knows that is something devoutly to be desired.



In 1965, Louis D. Levine went to Iran on a Fulbright fellowship and became involved with the ROM's Godin Project. A graduate of the University of Pennsylvania, he became an Assistant Director of the Godin project, joined the staff of the ROM in 1970, and is now an Associate Curator in the West Asian Department. Among his duties is the directorship of the

Seh Gabi project, though he has also dug at Hasanlu Tepe and Dinkha Tepe in Iran and in Israel. He has also done a good deal of work on the historical geography of ancient Iran, travelling widely in the hope of locating some of the places mentioned in texts from 1000-500 B.C., a project that began with Dr. Levine's Ph.D. thesis.







  
ROM